

Post Office Box 214  
Springfield, Missouri 65802



June 11, 1998

Honorable Kit Bond  
United States Senator  
293 Russell Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510-2503

Dear Senator Bond,

Thank you for the job you are doing to represent the good people of Missouri, in particular, Southwest Missouri. We realize it is a tough job that requires pensive judgement and consideration as to how your decisions may affect the lives of your constituents.

One of those decisions is your assistance in obtaining federal grant funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development for the Kitchen, Inc., also known as the Missouri Hotel, in Springfield. While Sister Lorraine Bibel and her professional staff do a tremendous job providing very important social services in our area, we are experiencing growing problems as a result of the methods of operation. We understand that welfare reform has made public-private partnerships a necessity and in many cases a beneficial byproduct, however, in this case we are concerned about the negative impact not only on those in proximity to the compound, but particularly upon those who reside there and seek real help.

The problem began several months ago when a local police officer learned of a fugitive living at the Kitchen and arrived to make an arrest. The officer was prohibited by staff from acting upon the warrant. This dispute played out over several days in the Springfield News-Leader and various community gatherings.

What began as a seemingly insignificant matter to the Kitchen staff has escalated into community fear and even anger. Consensus in the surrounding neighborhoods and around the city is that the Kitchen is not a "church" although it is affiliated with one, and that any fugitives living there are not political enemies of an oppressive regime and therefore should not be granted refuge. Indeed, the feeling of many in the area is that criminals are, unknowingly even, being harbored in a place that is intended to be a refuge for the hurting and disenfranchised families and children who have no where else to go.

In hopes of solving the impasse, numerous requests have been made by various community leaders for the Kitchen to adopt the policy of the Salvation Army which asks clients to obtain a slip from the Police Department stating that they have no outstanding warrants before they register at the shelter. Another shelter just down the street from The Kitchen, The Victory Mission, provides a list of transient residents to an area officer who then checks for outstanding warrants for violent crime. The News-Leader carried a front page article on this additional dispute after Sr. Lorraine refused to adopt either safeguard.

*Dedicated to Quality Living in the Center City*

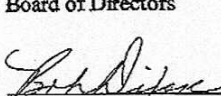
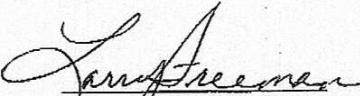
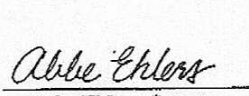
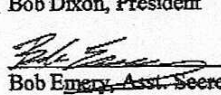
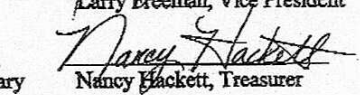
This would not be such a potent issue were it not for the fact that 60% of the residents come from outside of Springfield and half of those from outside Missouri; and that by national averages, one in seven has a warrant(s) outstanding for their arrest. Neighbors are not concerned about people wanted for petty crimes, but those wanted for murder, child sexual abuse, grand theft, rape, and assault pose a serious threat to our well being. What's worse is it has created a breeding ground for additional crime inside the shelter.

Other problems surrounding the Kitchen have been the continual problems with dumpster divers and the inebriated driving business from a business district that is beginning to recover from years of neglect. Our experience as residents of Springfield's largest Nationally Registered Historic District has been that national studies have uncovered the real problem....we are dealing with a growth industry, one which seeks and attracts clients even in booming economic cycles both locally and nationally.

We urge you to consult with Kitchen officials concerning adoption of a Salvation Army-style, non-threatening policy and urge them to protect those both inside and outside their walls. If you are met with the same opposition, we respectfully ask you to distance yourself from their attempts to obtain additional federal funding and in fact impede those attempts. This is a matter of grave consequence to this area and to the many neighbors who have expressed anger at the situation but are trying, in spite of the facts, to raise their families, live and work in the area, and in many cases invest their life savings and sweat equity in historic homes of great promise which some would have written off long ago. We can not allow crime to undermine efforts to revitalize our inner cities.

Your careful consideration and pensive judgement on this and every issue you face in your daily duties is always appreciated.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Midtown Neighborhood Association  
Board of Directors

 Bob Dixon, President	 Larry Freeman, Vice President	 Abbe Ehlers, Secretary
 Bob Emery, Asst. Secretary	 Nancy Hackett, Treasurer	

cc: Senator John Ashcroft  
Rep. Roy Blunt  
Springfield Legislative Field Offices  
State Rep. Chuck Wooten, Dist 137  
State Rep. Craig Hosmer, Dist 138  
Springfield City Council  
Paul & Sharon Nahon, 7th District Bond Brigade Office  
Sister Lorraine Bibel, The Kitchen Inc.